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# The Inner Light

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**Swarthmore Lecture,  
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Swarthmore Lecture, 1924

# THE INNER LIGHT AND MODERN THOUGHT

BY

GERALD KENWAY HIBBERT, M.A., B.D.

(HEADMASTER OF ACKWORTH SCHOOL).

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## Preface

The Swarthmore Lectureship was established by the Woodbrooke Extension Committee, at a meeting held December 7th, 1907 : the minute of the Committee providing for "an annual lecture on some subject relating to the message and work of the Society of Friends." The name "Swarthmore" was chosen in memory of the home of Margaret Fox, which was always open to the earnest seeker after Truth, and from which loving words of sympathy and substantial material help were sent to fellow-workers.

The Lectureship has a two-fold purpose : first, to interpret further to the members of the Society of Friends their Message and Mission ; and, secondly, to bring before the public the spirit, the aims and the fundamental principles of the Friends.

## Preface

The Lectures have been delivered on the evening preceding the assembly of the Friends' Yearly Meeting in each year. The present Lecture was delivered on the evening preceding the Yearly Meeting, 1924.

A complete list of previous Lectures, as published in book form, will be found at the beginning of this volume.

# THE INNER LIGHT AND MODERN THOUGHT

GEORGE FOX TERCENTENARY : 1624-1924

## INTRODUCTION.

WHEN George Fox came with his message of the Inner Light, and made his appeal to "that of God in every man," he builded better than he knew. Like all great teachers, he had a vision of a new aspect of Truth, which he "glimpsed" by intuition, and which became the basis of all his thought and practice. After long search and deep spiritual longings, he suddenly found the solution of his problems, as testified in the well-known passage in his *Journal*: "Then, O! then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy." He identified the divine principle that was in every man with Jesus Christ, the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. To this he boldly made his appeal, and on this foundation he built the superstructure of his faith.

To grasp a truth like this, however, and to see all the implications it involves, are two different things. A great test of the truth of a

man's teaching is its power to stimulate other thinkers ; if it has within itself the seeds of life, it will be a plot wherein many fair and unexpected plants will flower. Fox, like all men, was to some extent limited by the conditions of his time. He could not be a twentieth century man while living in the seventeenth. True, he was far ahead of his time, as all spiritual geniuses must be. True he was in some respects " singularly modern," to use our patronising phrase. But when all is said and done, he could not see the implications of his message as clearly as we can see them to-day. He spoke the truth, but he could hardly see how true it was. Our horizon has widened, our knowledge of God and man has deepened, and without any conceit we can say we understand his message better than he did himself. It is no disparagement to any creative personality to say this, for it is he himself who has largely enabled us to see things that were hidden from his own eyes.

Three centuries have now elapsed since his birth. So true and fundamental do we believe his message to have been—so faithful a re-capturing of the spirit of Christ and so adequate a re-interpretation of the New Testament—that we feel we can do no greater service to our day than " to bring his message up to date," to state some of its implications in modern terms, and above all to live out in Great Britain, or Europe, or America, or wherever it may be, the gospel proclaimed by Fox. We believe that such a

message actually lived out is the greatest thing in the world and the greatest need of the world ; for it is the gospel of Christ Himself.

## I. THE INNER LIGHT AND HUMAN PROGRESS.

First of all then, let us cast our eyes backward from the time of Fox, and see what deeper meaning we can find in his message in the light of our greater knowledge of that past. Then let us look forward from his days to our own, and see how his gospel stands in the light of to-day.

One important point to remember is that Darwin has lived in the interval between George Fox and ourselves. His evolutionary outlook has proved revolutionary. Our view-point to-day is almost inconceivably removed from the view-point of a hundred years ago: Though we may differ as to what Darwin actually taught, and though our ideas of the evolutionary process may vary, the main thing is that we all look at the universe as developing and unfolding. Every department of knowledge has been profoundly influenced by this, and it is not too much to say that the gain has been enormous, and that the universe has become vastly more interesting. Of course we must not make the mistake of identifying evolution with steady and inevitable progress, but as we look back over a long sweep of time, we do see that man has climbed from lower to higher, and is to-day still climbing. How fascinating is the story, even the little of it that we

know already—the primeval nebula from which our sun presumably came into being ; the forming of our solar system and the solidification of our own particular planet ; the origin of life, dim and mysterious and very lowly at first, struggling up through many stages until the human level was reached ; primitive man with his loves and hatreds, his co-operation and his fights, his other-regarding and his self-regarding interests, right up to man as he is to-day, with so much of the divine within him, and yet so much of the brute still left ! What a pageant it makes, as it begins slowly to unroll itself before our astonished and (sometimes) indignant gaze !

What is it that has lifted man upwards ? What is the cause of the progress there has been in the world ? Many different answers have been given, and many different theories evolved. But broadly speaking the answer seems to amount to this : Even in the dim remote ages of sub-human evolution, where survival seems so largely based on the struggle for self-preservation, we see co-operation and mutual aid playing their part. Much new light has been thrown on this by recent biology. Even there the race has been not so much to the individually swift, as to those who found out how to combine. Nowhere does naked and unashamed selfishness—if we may use this word of such an early stage—pay ; it cannot long persist. As we rise to the human level, we find that gradually through co-operation and the need of dwelling in communities man's selfish



and pugnacious instincts have developed into unselfish principles of action. The "social sense" has triumphed to some degree over the purely individualistic sense: the herd instinct has prevailed. Instincts and passions that weakened the social tie have tended to die out; religions that were anti-social (e.g., Fetishism) have proved to be blind alleys and not the main track. Most, if not all, of our virtues to-day are "sublimations" of instincts which might have been turned to base ends. Primitive man at a certain stage was probably a creature of instincts that were non-moral—the instinct to clutch, the instinct to protect oneself, the instinct to fight, and so on. Gradually under the influence of communal life and the development of personality these instincts became moralised. Character was formed, morality became possible, as more and more man's Social Sense inhibited the anti-social instincts, and led him on from step to step.

Now is it wrong to identify this Social Sense with the Light Within? May we not, taking this broad comprehensive sweep, say: "This has been the Divine Light within man, inseparable from him, native and fundamental to him, leading him

"O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
The night is gone"?

This will in the fulness of time lead him into a warless world, the veritable Kingdom of Heaven." This is a conception that could not possibly have entered the minds of Fox and his contemporaries,

but surely it is implicit there. It is all *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, all to the greater glory of God. The Psalmist sang, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers," and burst into a shout of glory to the God who made them; but our survey of the heavens goes far deeper than his, our conception of God is correspondingly greater and our Hallelujah correspondingly louder. So with George Fox; we should out-sing him in his praises of the Divine grace and goodness because to us a fuller revelation has been given. Let us not be hesitant and nervous, but boldly claim that all human progress is due to the spirit of man, through which and in which as a vital element the Divine Spirit has ever been working; or putting it otherwise, let us say that the cause of all progress has been the Divine Light illuminating man as he was willing to be illuminated, not coming into him from without, but lying at the very core of his being, human nature being veritably instinct with the Divine. How fundamentally opposed is this idea to the Calvinism current in Fox's day, or even to the modified Calvinism still extant, it is easy to see. If this be true, there is no such thing as Original Sin (though we fully admit that there are hereditary tendencies to evil which handicap us all), nor is there need of Baptism to secure entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven—but considerable need of modification of the Prayer Book and certain other statements of theology. Mankind, it has been said, is incurably religious, and if this is properly understood it is, I think,

true. It does not mean that every man is always religious, or that if left to himself he is bound to come right, or anything so silly and vapid. The facts are dead against such an idea. It rather means that man as man has within him some spark of the Divine (otherwise he would not be man), and that if he wills he can fan that spark to a flame; also that unless he does so fan it, he is miserable and dissatisfied. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."

Although the early Friends could not go as far along this line as we can go to-day, it is marvellous how far they did go, especially when we consider the general theological outlook of their day. They recognised that God had been manifest in the world long before the time of Christ. They saw in Conscience something of the Divine Light flooding the soul. Fox "boldly asserted that in all men, even in the heathen who knew not the Scriptures nor Christ in the flesh, there was a principle of God which as it was heeded would lead to salvation. It was, he says, in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated* (p. 332) a divine principle in Nebuchadnezzar, a worshipper of images, that caused him to say "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego." He and the early Friends identified this principle, the Light as they called it, with Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> In much the same way, Tertullian had spoken of

<sup>1</sup> *The Quakers: their Story and Message*, by A. Neave Brayshaw, p. 12.

"the soul naturally Christian," and Paul had said of God that "He left not Himself without witness." This it was, in fact, that gave nerve to the missionary efforts of the early Friends. So far from making their belief that God had spoken to the heathen an excuse for idleness and indifference, they went forth with an amazing confidence, feeling sure that the Divine Spirit had already prepared the way for their own more glorious message.

Looking at it from a somewhat different view-point, we can see that the very fact that man is a morally responsible agent is due to "that of God" within him. How is morality possible? Only when a realisation of two possible courses, one higher and the other lower, dawns upon a self-conscious being, and in obedience to what we call his true self he chooses the higher. It is not an automatic process; there is a certain amount of choice, and where there is choice there is freedom, and where freedom the possibility of virtue and of vice. An automaton cannot do right, nor can it do wrong. Sin is a meaningless term to apply to the action of a machine. In fact it is arguable whether the word Sin can be applied to the action of any being who is below the level of human personality. One must have risen to a certain level before one can sin. Strictly speaking, a cat is not cruel when it plays with a mouse, nor is a thrush a sinner when it taps the lawn for the worms to come up. Sin arises when a being consciously recognises two courses—a

higher and a lower—as possible, and deliberately chooses the lower. Surely, we may hold that this growing principle in the universe, which passes from the almost blind unconsciousness and automatism of the vegetable and animal world into the developed self-consciousness of the human being, is the Inner Light, the Divine Spirit, inextricably interwoven with the life of the world, even in its lowest manifestations. The instinct that makes a flower turn towards the sun is a rudimentary form of the fully-developed Will in man, and both alike may be called manifestations of the Divine Energy in differing forms. If any one objects that this traces the possibility of sinning to the work of the Divine Spirit in man, we answer “Why not?” Seeing that goodness, virtue, morality, is impossible without choice, and that choice involves the possibility of wrong choice, we are forced to the conclusion that a being who is capable of moral action must also have the power of sinning. Therefore, to say that we are capable of sinning is to say that we are capable of goodness, and surely this is the highest object of Creation that we can conceive. If we ask why God created the universe at all, the only satisfying answer is that He wished to bring into existence beings capable of goodness and of love, in communion with whom He Himself could find complete satisfaction. In all probability there are higher orders of spirits in the universe than human beings. If so they must have in even greater degree than ourselves the capacity to sin,

though this does not imply the necessity or the actuality of sinning.

In view of what has been said, may we not hold that the controversy as to whether the Light is wholly external or wholly internal is really due to a misunderstanding? There are some who seem to look on the Inner Light with suspicion and distrust: they regard it as a dangerous doctrine. They urge that there is need of a special revelation of God from without; that unless Christ enter the man's heart he cannot live; that he must be born again in order to inherit eternal life. On the other hand, many advocates of the Inner Light have used loose language and have given the impression that man by himself, man unaided, can of himself be all that he ought to be and rise to his full height. Surely it is not a question of one or the other, existing absolutely and apart. If man is essentially a partaker of the Divine nature, if the Spirit of God is in him from the moment when he began to be, then the spiritual life is a glorious co-operation between the two. God does not come into a man's life at any subsequent time, for He is already there. Man does not develop unaided by Divine grace, for every step of his development is due to that grace. This is not identifying man with God—which would be Pantheism, and incidentally absurd; nor is it absolutely separating man from God, which is Deism and even more unthinkable. It is an assertion both of the Transcendence and of the Immanence of God. God is more than man,

greater—ininitely greater—than man ; yet akin to man, dwelling within him, breathing into him the breath of spiritual as well as of physical life, and drawing him upward by the glow and impact of His own tremendous Personality. We must be born again, true ; but the seeds of the re-birth are within us. It needs but the recognition that we are already God's, that He has loved us and still loves with an everlasting love, to bring about the re-birth of the soul, the re-orientation of the whole life. " Behold God was in this place, and I knew it not." Behold, God was already in my heart, and I realised it not. How glorious the wonder of the great awakening !

" Too late I loved Thee, O Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new ! And lo ! Thou wert within and I abroad searching for Thee ! Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee." (Augustine Soliloq., Book X., quoted in notes to Whittier's poem, " The Shadow and the Light.")

## II. GEORGE FOX AND PLATO.

Another fruitful line of research in connection with George Fox's teaching is his dependence, conscious or unconscious, upon the great Mystics that had gone before. Mysticism, as opposed to Rationalism and (in the narrower sense) to Evangelicalism, may be defined as a first-hand knowledge of God and direct communion with Him. It takes many forms, and varies in degree, but in essence it is this. The influence of the



mystics on the early Friends has been fully dealt with by Rufus M. Jones in his *Studies in Mystical Religion*, a volume which well repays study. There is no need to repeat what he so admirably says there. I would simply like to emphasise the debt that Quakerism owes to Plato, whom we may call the first of the Western Mystics. From him, as from a mighty spring, has flowed the mystic stream ever since, profoundly influencing Christian theology through the neo-Platonist school, and still to-day making an irresistible appeal to those whom Rationalism, or "Evangelicalism," Sacerdotalism or Legalism cannot satisfy. The influence of Platonism is clearly seen in the New Testament. The writer of the Fourth Gospel and the author of the book of Revelation are both under its influence, alike as to what they adopt and as to what they reject. (See Lecture VII. in Dr. Rendel Harris's book, *Sidelights on New Testament Research*, where for example Dr. Harris speaks of the Logos doctrine in John, chap. 1, as "the most pronounced piece of Platonism in the New Testament.") The Fourth Gospel is emphatically the mystical Gospel, "a spiritual Gospel," as Clement of Alexandria called it, and though Friends do not neglect the other Gospels and value beyond words the historical Jesus there presented, it is to the Fourth Gospel that they turn for the deepest interpretation of Christ, and it is to its presentation of Truth that their minds most naturally respond. Plato, St. John, and George Fox are three teachers whose names



may be linked together with solid and good reason. They take largely the same outlook upon life, and they present us with an interpretation of religious experience which to many of us is the most satisfying we know.

Plato lived at a time of great unsettlement of thought and belief (approximately B.C. 429-347). The old ideas of the gods were being outgrown and the Homeric Olympus no longer satisfied men's longings. Somewhat similar is the state of things to-day, when the old material ideas of God are proving unsatisfactory, and we are searching for a conception of God as personal without any material qualifications. It is difficult for us, for instance, to picture God as other than a glorified man. What we need is a truer knowledge of personality, and this we are gradually gaining. Plato's was an age of Scepticism, as is every age of exceptional transition. Materialistic and mechanistic theories of the universe were in the air, and the Idealists had to buckle on their armour and take up the challenge of Democritus and the Sophists. Was knowledge possible? What was Truth? Was there God, or were there gods, and if so what was He or were they?

Now times of doubt are also times of renewed belief, for people are forced to think and to lay their foundations for themselves. The great work of Plato was twofold: first, to maintain that truth and right are not conventions, dependent on the fickle taste of man, but things of which we can have true knowledge; and secondly, to shift the

emphasis of philosophy from nature to man, to look to human nature and the personality of man for the clue to its problems. Plato turns away from the popular religion with its gods and goddesses and their human frailties, and gives us his conception of God as One. There must, he says, be a personal origin for a world which is derived ; and that origin must be *Spirit* to explain its motion, *Reason* to explain its order and beauty, and *Goodness* to explain the rule of justice in it. God is the highest idea of goodness and perfection, seeing all and guiding all. God's power is limited only by His own moral nature—for He cannot wish to change—by the permanence of evil—for there must always be evil to contrast with good—and by the intractable qualities of matter—a line along which we cannot follow him. Plato sums up his theology in two phrases, " God is perfect and unchangeable " ; " God is true and the author of truth."

It was a magnificent conception for a man of that period to have. The wonder is not that it fell short of the Christian conception of God, but that it rose so high. It failed on the side of Love. " God is Love " was a higher note yet to be struck, and the suffering of redemptive love lay outside Plato's ken. Augustine found that Plato helped him far on his way ; from Plato he learned that " God is Spirit," but " that ' the All-Great is the All-Loving too,' he could not learn from the sages of Hellenism " (Dean Inge, *Confessio Fidei*, p. 45). Plato himself felt there was something

beyond his grasp, when he hinted that "some more sure divine word" might yet come to man.

Living as he did at the time of the political decay of Athens, it was probably the unsatisfactory condition of outward things that drove him inward. He turned from the world of sense to the things that are not seen, and cast his anchor there. When Paul wrote "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal," we remember that he was a "graduate" of Tarsus University and may have been thinking of Plato. Seeing that the world around, the concrete world of experience, is so unsatisfying—"Change and decay in all around I see"—where shall we find the real world, the world of abiding values, which gives meaning to, and by which we can measure, the world of sense? Here, says Plato in effect, in the thought of the wise man; in the thought of the idea. The thought of the wise man is a faithful reflection of the real true world, the world which alone exists, which is not seen with the bodily eye, but with the eye of the spirit. True existence belongs to this world of ideas alone. The world of sensual experience is only a weak imperfect picture of the ideal world. The ideal is the truly real. It is heavenly love which lifts the wise man up into this higher world, and this world of ideas is the world of the Godhead; the highest idea is the Idea of Good, perfect Divine Being, God.

There is much in the Platonic teaching which to us is unsatisfactory and with which we cannot agree. His philosophy lacks the drive and stimulus of a great religion, and failed to become a powerful redemptive force until it was taken over by Christianity, which supplied the driving power needed. None the less, Christian theology at its best has run in the Platonic channels, and again and again has there been a return to Plato for cleansing and re-inspiration. Broadly speaking, the Greek stream in Christianity has been purer than the Latin, and certainly the Society of Friends has no doubt as to the stream from which it has mostly drunk. Christians of course derive their inspiration from Christ. He is the well from which they draw water. But the living water that has flowed from Christ comes to us through various channels—Greek, Roman, Jewish, Oriental, and the like—and the stream of which George Fox most freely drank was the first, though he knew it not.

The great legacy we have inherited from Greek thought consists in the two clear convictions, *first*, that there is a spark of the divine in man (this was the element of truth in polytheism, and of it we are the residuary legatees), and *second*, that the laws of the world which man discovers are divine thought. The first gives us the possibility of a first-hand religious experience; the second makes possible the acquisition of Science. The two together amount to what we mean by saying that God's image within recognises

God's truth without, and this is the essence of Revelation. There is a truth higher than and independent of what is commonly called "experience," of which the mind bears witness to itself. All this is admirably summed up by Dean Inge in his essay on *Confessio Fidei*, already referred to (in *Outspoken Essays*, second series, page 14), where, in discussing proofs of the existence of God, he says: "There is of course another line of proof, open to Platonists and Christians alike—that from religious experience. Mysticism rests on the gallant faith of Plato that 'the completely real can be completely known,' and that only the completely real can be completely known. Complete knowledge is the complete unity of knower and known, for we can in the last resort only know ourselves. The process of divine knowledge therefore consists in calling into activity a faculty which, as Plotinus says, all possess, but few use, the gift which the Cambridge Platonists called the seed of the deiform nature in the human soul. At the core of our personality is a spark lighted at the altar of God in heaven—a something too holy even to consent to evil, an inner light which can illuminate our whole being. To purify the eyes of the understanding by constant discipline, to detach ourselves from hampering worldly or fleshly desires, to accustom ourselves to ascend in heart and mind to the kingdom of the eternal values which are the thoughts and purposes of God—this is the quest of the mystic and the scheme of his progress

through his earthly life. It carries with it its own proof and justification, in the increasing clearness and certainty with which the truths of the invisible world are revealed to him who diligently seeks for them."

At the core of our personality is a spark lighted at the altar of God in heaven—can the Quaker faith be better expressed? Again and again man has tended to overlook this, and has constructed religious systems on other foundations; but continually he has had to return to this, as the only foundation that goes deep enough. Legalism and institutionalism are always hard at work to quench the spirit, and every religious revival is a return to the realisation of a direct communion between the human spirit and the Divine. Machinery is always interesting, and mechanical interpretations of the universe make a great appeal. As we shall see in a moment, man has often attempted to define and explain his religion in mechanical rather than in spiritual or personal terms, but the spirit of man works by something more glorious than machinery. Among those who have striven to uphold this spiritual, "mystical" view of Faith as a living first-hand grip upon God, the Society of Friends with all its failings has been a faithful few. Incidentally it is interesting to note that this view is by no means confined to Christianity. Every religious system has its "Quakers"—those who turn from the outward and the legal and the institutional, and focus their attention on the Divine that is within. There is

much fellowship between Friends and the Mystics of other religious systems. Let a Mohammedan or Hindu mystic teacher come to this country, and we realise at once how much we have in common with him. We believe we have something we can give him, but we also realise he has something to give us. Our conception of God and of Christ is distinctly "westernised," and to that extent partial and limited; we are increasingly coming to see that the East (with all its faults and failures) has its contribution to make to the full experience of God in Christ. The mystics of the world everywhere join hands. Their spirits leap together in a flash of joyful recognition; in the great deeps they find their unity and their abiding home. Read the history of the first few centuries of the Christian Church, and see if you can avoid a feeling of shame and humiliation. How different things might have been if Christ had been better understood, if the spirit had conquered the letter, if the spiritual and mystical element in the Church had prevailed, if Greece rather than Rome had been the guide! It is, however, of no use repining. Doubtless the lesson had to be learnt. Mysticism had its dangers, and still has them. In those days the dangers were not clearly seen; the knowledge of Personality and of the working of man's mind was not as sound as it is to-day, and every step of the way had to be paid for. The early Church had its Montanists, even as the early Friends had their James Nayler, and in either case the



temporary lapse has been allowed to outweigh the permanent value of the spirit shown. It is a terrible price that man pays for Freedom, but the price must be paid if Truth is to prevail.

### III. TRANSITION FROM PAST TO PRESENT.

We have now looked backward from the time of George Fox, and tried to see something of a deeper meaning in his teaching than he himself probably realised. Let us now look onward from his days to our own and see how his message stands in the light of to-day. In theory at any rate his teaching is accepted now by large numbers of Christians. Many Christians agree that the essence of Christianity consists in direct communion with the Father-God revealed by the Divine Son ; they hold that there is something of God in man, to which we can appeal and in which lies the hope of the world. Some Christians have even gone further, and admitted that neither in the Bible nor in the dictates of the Church can we find our ultimate authority, but that we need to press behind these to the Spirit that inspired the writers and teachers of long ago, and that inspires us to-day. It is this Spirit that will lead us into the Truth. There would still, however, seem to be room for the Society of Friends in the Church of Christ, mainly because that Society has tried to be more logical, in working out the implications of its fundamental tenets, and in putting them into practice. Without self-conceit, and fully



conscious of our failures and liability to err, we may hold that ours is an experiment in religion that time has justified, and that we have grasped a way of life that illuminates and emancipates the human spirit, and helps it on its pilgrim way. Our Society has done a little in the realm of practical philanthropy and human betterment; may it not also do something to point the way to an interpretation of life along Christian lines that shall satisfy the intellectual demands of to-day, and above all to manifest the Christian life not as intellect or as emotion or as practical benevolence, but as the interfusing of the human spirit by the Divine, and as the being set on fire by love? It is the whole nature of man that should respond to the Divine appeal; we should love Him with our whole heart and soul and mind.

Let us see how this belief in the Inner Light seems to be working out in modern thought; how it is affected by our fuller knowledge of Psychology and Ethics; how it affects our views on Revelation, Inspiration, Forgiveness, Authority, and Guidance; above all, how it affects our conception of Christ. Does it replace and supersede Him, as some claim and others fear, or does it make more natural and more necessary His person and work? And if the latter, in what way are we to think of Him?

At this point, appalled by the greatness of the task, we might well pause for a moment—whether like Vergil or Milton, with an appeal to the Muses to help us now if ever, or like Socrates to listen

to what our attendant Daimon has to say, or as in Yearly Meeting when a knotty point arises to sit in silent waiting upon God that in the pure stillness His leading may be known.

“ And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou knowest ; Thou from the first  
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,  
And mad'st it pregnant : what in me is dark,  
Illumine ; what is low, raise and support ;  
That to the highth of this great argument  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.”

(“ Paradise Lost,” Book I., 17-26.)

Merely to utter these words is a benediction, and leaves one breathless and trembling before the very feet of God.

#### IV. THE PERSONAL AND THE MECHANICAL.

Reference was made a little earlier to the proneness of the human intellect to interpret the universe in terms of mechanism rather than of spirit or personality. Let us now pursue this thought a little further. There are two main types of action with which we are familiar, the mechanical and the personal. The latter is on much the higher level. Interesting as a piece of machinery may be, a person is more interesting still ; for the creator is greater than the thing he has created. A boy may gaze spell-bound at a locomotive engine, but the boy is greater than the

engine. In mechanical action there is neither right nor wrong, to it can be assigned neither blame nor praise. Only on the level of free personal (i.e., spiritual) action does moral responsibility arise, and right and wrong become possible. Only a person can *behave*.

We are slowly evolving from the mechanical to the personal stage. Long ages ago man interpreted the universe through magic, and magic is almost entirely mechanical. Mechanical ideas are hard to outgrow. Even to-day, as we examine our religious beliefs and try to express in words our spiritual experiences, we often find ourselves thinking in terms of machinery rather than of personal relationship. We have, however, to-day a truer conception of personality than ever before, and are honestly trying to define religion in terms of personal relationship between man and God, banishing as far as possible the mechanical notions that will keep cropping up in our minds.

Every religious revival has been an attempt to do this—Christianity the greatest of all. The New Testament throbs with life, not the throb of the revolving engine, but the throb of personal relationship, of enthusiasm, of joy. Christ set aside all mechanical and official ideas of relationship between God and man, and substituted the personal. God is our Father. Our dealings with Him are not on the automatic sliding-scale of "so much merit, so much reward," but on the simple natural footing of the family life. The Protestant Reformation, again, was a great protest

against the mechanical conception of Faith that had so weakened the power of the Catholic Church. It was at heart a valiant attempt to interpret Faith as the living response of the soul to God, rather than as the mechanical assent to a form of words that have often lost their meaning. Most interesting of all, as far as Friends are concerned, was the birth of our own Society in the seventeenth century. There perhaps as clearly as anywhere, we see a determined attempt to sweep away the old mechanical ideas of the religious life (ideas like those of Election, Original Sin, and the rest) and to re-interpret Christianity to the world as the life of the spirit.

This work was done nobly by our forefathers, but not completely. There still remains a task for us. We see their limitations, as future ages will see ours. Our modern Quaker historians have pointed out to us the weakness involved in the inadequate ideas of personality in the seventeenth century, and the consequent Dualism that tends to bring men down from the personal to the mechanical. The task is handed on to us to-day, and it is the same task as ever—more and more to conceive of the Christian religion as a life, and to express it in terms of spirit and personality, and not of mechanism.

We are persons, and we believe that God is One with whom we may enter into personal relationship. This is a cautious statement, and may gain the assent of some who would hesitate to say they believe in a Personal God. If we

really believe that the relationship between ourselves and God is personal, and not mechanical, many consequences will follow. Some of these are now briefly outlined.

In the first place it makes us revise our conception of God's omnipotence. If we are persons and not machines, God respects our personality and deals with us by personal methods. He does not force or compel ; He persuades, woos, loves. Even God cannot *make* us good, for a made goodness is a contradiction in terms. Goodness is the result of our own choices ; there is no such thing as compulsory goodness. We must, therefore, assume that God has limited Himself by the bringing into existence of wills endowed with a real independence, able to resist Him or to make His will their own. This is clearly a self-limitation on the part of God, not one imposed on Him from without. He chose to do it. Probably, however, we err in calling this a limitation of God's power, for it opens the door for His dearest work, the winning of man to Himself. He is much less free in dealing with machinery than with persons. The outstanding thought is that God respects our personality. He does not bully or attempt to force us. His message is one of gracious and loving appeal : " Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Is not this one of the truths involved in belief in the Inner Light ? The in-dwelling Divine Spirit is in living personal relationship with us, neither sharply separated from us nor absolutely merged

in us, but communing with us as we commune with our dearest friend, only far more intimately. In this communion we realise our unity with all mankind, for we feel that this is the self-same spirit that dwells in all. From this follows the thought of the sacredness of personality. If God treats us with such loving respect, how can we bully our brother? Thus develops a sense of the value of human personality, a sense which has always characterised our Society's life. The whole witness of the Society to the need for Social Reform, and its attitude towards War and the Social Order depend on this.

Again, let us take Revelation and Inspiration. How hard to rid ourselves of mechanical ideas here! We often represent God as having deposited so much "revelation" on the earth *en bloc*, as a man might dump a load of bricks on a vacant site, and then leave it for people to take home by barrowfuls! Whereas the truth surely is that Revelation is a personal relationship, involving personal communion between the one who reveals himself and the one to whom he is revealed. Has it not always happened that Revelation has come *through persons*, through prophet-souls, and not through formal statements of truth? As we open our hearts more and more to God's love, He can reveal more of Himself to us, just as an earthly father can progressively show his true self to the child growing up into a realisation of his love. There cannot be a Revelation fixed and for all time, independent of

the inquiring soul. The one is relative to the other; there is a mutual interaction, each conditioning and being conditioned by the other.

Similarly with Inspiration. We know the mechanical theory of inspiration that was held by the ancients. They believed that they became God-filled, God-intoxicated, possessed, "enthusiast"; the presence of the god suspending their natural abilities and for the moment blotting out their personality. The god took possession of them, and spoke his will through them much as though he were a ventriloquist. God was most where man was least. Man was robbed of his personality for the time being, and became a mere tool; he was the lyre on which the god played. How difficult we find it even to-day to shed these conceptions! But as we hold to the thought that Inspiration must be a matter of personal relationship and not of mechanical action, we begin to see that if God respects our personality He cannot mean to annihilate it—least of all at the moment of our truest and highest self-realisation. Even we dull mortals see that to impose our will on another, to use him as a mere mouth-piece to utter our opinions, is not respecting his rights as a person, and is unworthy of a true man. "How much more our Heavenly Father!" As we grasp more fully the facts of the spiritual life, we see that inspiration means the quickening and illuminating of all our faculties by our communion with God, and the heightening rather than the lowering of



our personality. We become more our true selves ; we open and expand under His gracious influence ; man is most where God is most. Just as a noble earthly friend inspires and nerves us to greater issues by the very impact of his personality, so we feel it to be with our Divine Companion. Communion with God makes us men and not machines.

Or again, let us take the great subjects of Atonement, Forgiveness and Salvation. How sad that these have become problems and difficulties to us, when they should be the most glorious and illuminating realities in life ! Is it not because we have fallen into mechanical ways of expressing the deep truths that underlie them ? Do we not even talk of the *plan* of salvation ? Doubtless it is the eternal wish of the Father's heart that all may love Him, but if Salvation consists in living the life of full communion with God, is it not strange to speak of it as a plan ? What plan is there for falling in love, or in what sense does a father plan that his boy may love him ? There is no doubt intention, hope, longing, and much more, but surely " plan " suggests something artificial, unnatural, stereotyped, in a word mechanical. Following out the ideas suggested by the word *plan* theologians have represented the process of salvation as that of going through certain forms, taking up certain positions, experiencing certain feelings. There has been a tendency to say " Unless you pass through these stages, feel thus, and adopt such



and such expressions, you cannot be saved." It seems so unnatural. It suggests a tennis-lawn with lines and courts neatly marked out; you must serve with your foot on or outside that line, keep to the proper court and drop the ball within a certain mark, or you will make a fault. If we are right in our idea of personal relationship, Salvation is a process (*cf.* the New Testament phrase, "those who are being saved") and not a finished result; it is the growing more and more like God through constant communion with Him, increasingly having in us that mind which was in Christ Jesus. In this happy, free communion Salvation consists. There are no rules to keep but those which love itself imposes.

Similarly with Atonement and Forgiveness. There can be nothing mechanical about them; they are natural results of the free communion of spirit with spirit. We see them exemplified every day in our human relationships, and we do not then interpret them in terms of mechanics. Why should we change our view-point when they are exemplified in our relationship with God? Divine forgiveness must be the same thing in kind as human forgiveness (though infinitely greater), and there is nothing of the mechanical in the latter. There are of course certain conditions to be observed, but that is another matter. However willing the one may be to forgive, full forgiveness can exist only when the wrong-doer repents and opens his heart in love to the love of the wronged. The complete stage of reconciliation cannot come

till then. But Jesus tells us that God does not wait to forgive until we have asked for forgiveness. He is there all the time, yearning over us with full forgiving love, and it is this love that stirs within us the beginnings of remorse and the longing to arise and go to our Father.

Forgiveness then being a personal relationship, it is obvious that a man cannot be freed from guilt by any external or mechanical process. Even the Cross of Christ cannot avail for us unless we are willing to enter into His experience, to identify ourselves with human need and suffering, and to be crucified along with Him. We are freed from guilt as we enter into the life of Christ, and as Christ lives in us. As we live with Him, His life flows through us, cleansing us, giving us power over sin, making us more than conquerors. Jesus is the great Revealer of the Father's love, and as we yield our hearts in loving response, we are being reconciled to our Father, the estrangement caused by our sin is removed, and we become happy members of the Family of God.

In the same way we might consider all the great principles involved in the Christian religion. It would be found that they are all most truly interpreted as expressions of that communion with God which is the essence of religion. We may well believe that as our knowledge of human personality develops, many of our difficulties will disappear. Most of all, probably, will this be true of our difficulties about the Person of Christ. The old controversies on Unitarianism *versus*

Trinitarianism, and on Christ's Divinity *versus* His humanity, are already passing away as we begin to form a truer conception of personality. Herein the Quaker may thank God and take courage, for the tendency of modern thought and present-day psychology is all to confirm the fundamental Quaker position of the Inner Light when rightly understood. Man, as we have seen, is "incurably religious"; human nature is essentially divine, rooted and grounded in God; God and man (though not identical) are closely akin, and man's natural heritage is communion with his Father—these are the implications and the necessary corollaries of the Quaker faith. Man then need not seek God without; he will find Him within. As he plumbs the deeps of his own nature, he will be feeling after God. This is not to identify God and man, nor to make man out as perfect and needing no help but his own; far from it. It is simply recognising the implications of our fundamental belief, that God is "made up" in the very texture of human personality, and that literally "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." If we had the pluck to follow out this great belief to the uttermost, and to accept its logical consequences, we should be far nearer to the New Testament religion than we are, and should bring incalculable blessing to mankind—while incidentally justifying our existence as a separate religious body.

Closely allied to the mechanical interpretation that we so often give of the spiritual life, is the

tendency to regard God as an official rather than as a Father. To think of God as King or Judge seems to be doing Him greater honour than to think of Him as Father or Friend. Yet the father is greater than the king, as the man is greater than the official. All that is of value in the king—the sovereignty and the sense of justice—is in the father, for love contains all these. Again and again Jesus emphasises this personal way of regarding God as opposed to the official. There is no trace of officialdom in Jesus, whether He is speaking of God or of Himself. When some hailed Him as the Messiah, He accepted the title indeed, but changed its meaning. To the men of His day the title denoted rank, officialdom; to Jesus it denoted an attitude of mind, a consecration of spirit. In His eyes Messiahship was not a rank to be assumed, or an office to be filled; it was a supreme opening for service, and its consummation lay in pouring out His soul unto death. It was the self-dedication of the Suffering Servant rather than the Davidic sovereignty or the Mosaic judgeship that our Lord chose as the ideal of His own life. Does not this suggest that we should do our utmost to clear our minds of all official ideas when we try to interpret the spiritual life and to tell others of the meaning of God's love? Clearly we honour God more when we think of Him as father than as king, and certainly we get to know Him better. Let us take an illustration from life. At our great military pageants, one of the main features is a march-past

of the troops with their Commanding Officer at the head. Richly attired, he rides with much pomp and ceremony—every inch the official. The bystanders admire and cheer ; they like his dignity, his state, his mien. Stiff and unbending he rides there, and the populace applaud. But see him an hour later when he reaches home, how he strips off his insignia, hurries up to the nursery, and in a trice is playing with his boys, rolling on the floor with them, or letting them climb his legs and swarm on to his shoulder. In which rôle do we see the man, the real man—in the official, or in the father ? And may we not reverently say that Jesus shows us God “ in the nursery,” sharing our joys and sorrows, clasping us in His arms, and giving us Eternal Life through that happy fellowship with Him ? To some the idea may seem irreverent, yet there does not seem a vast difference between this father and the father of the Prodigal Son, who cast all thoughts of dignity to the winds and simply *ran* to meet his boy and flung his arms around him.

## V. AUTHORITY.

If we come now to the difficult problem of Authority, what light can we find ? This question has been so well treated by John Wilhelm Rowntree, Edward Grubb, and others, that one need only touch on it here, referring the reader to their works for a more detailed study. We shall feel that no mechanical conception of Authority

can satisfy us ; it must be a spiritual conception, interpreted in terms of personality. The acceptance of an Authority is not a matter of picking and choosing ; it is not a matter of purely intellectual assent ; still less is it attainable by forcing ourselves to accept it, whether by the hypnotic influence of saying repeatedly " I believe it, I believe it," or by the direct bludgeoning method, saying to ourselves, " You had better believe this, or else—— ! " In the long run we really believe a thing when we cannot help believing it, when the whole of our being cries out passionately " It is so," and when to disbelieve would be to stultify our whole existence. " Only those things that we cannot help believing are strength and speed to us."<sup>1</sup> If the Inner Light be that of God within us, then the ultimate authority for each of us will be the Light that streams therefrom upon the thoughts and actions of our life. We shall watch and examine ourselves continually in this Light, and as we live faithfully in accordance with its illumination we shall progressively advance in the life of the spirit. Our authority is thus living and progressive, born rather from the communion of our spirit with the Divine Spirit than from a sense of obedience due to a command. Love constitutes the most binding authority in the world, and love is a communion of spirit with spirit.

The tendency throughout the ages has been to look for some outward and concrete authority

<sup>1</sup> *Essays in Christian Thinking*, by A. T. Cadoux, p. 16.

in the realm of religion. This may be a collection of writings, such as the Koran and the Bible, or the pronouncements of the Church, or Tradition, or the words of a great teacher, or a blend of them all. The point is that Religion has been understood as obedience to some external authority and finding out what that authority has to say. The alternative has been said to be the following of the individual imagination, whim, or fancy—a course which would lead us to chaos without any uniformity at all. This alternative, which has seemed too terrible, has driven many if not most of the nobler souls to adopt the former. They have feared, and rightly, the setting up of a purely individual criterion.

More and more, however, is dissatisfaction being felt with an authority that is purely external. Men are beginning to see that it is really no authority at all, for until an external rule is voluntarily adopted by a man as an inward principle of action it cannot be said to move him, and when it has once been so adopted it ceases to be external. We are arriving at the point where we see that authority is found in a combination of both factors. We do need the Scriptures and the Church, but these become Authority only in so far as they appeal to the progressively enlightened spirit of man as true. And we do need the individual interpretation of the facts of life, only this must not be an unchecked or individualistic interpretation. It needs checking and criticising and correcting by measuring it



against the corporate conscience of the community past and present, by comparing it with the best thought and teaching of the ages, and by sifting it in the light of the noblest personalities known to us, most of all in the light of the character and personality of Christ. This is the true Church—the fellowship of all seekers after Truth at all times. It is a Church that speaks with no dead voice and acts with no dead hand ; it is living and it grows. Just as we really believe only in that which “ finds ” us in the Scriptures, whatever we may say we believe, so it is only that message of the Church that grips and quickens us that has any vital authority.

If men would take the risk, and would form a community on the lines of seeking authority in such a guise, they would find it would not lead to chaos, but to God. That would not necessarily mean Uniformity, so dear to many ; nay, certainly it would not, for God must be the most rich and varied Entity in all existence, pulsating with energy, the eternal home of change, and yet Himself changeless. If we believe that the Divine spirit dwells in man, we may safely trust ourselves to this great experiment. Human error cannot of course be eliminated (neither can it in the interpretation of the dictates of Church or Bible), but a community filled with a passion for truth, following the highest that is known to it, and checking all its conclusions by the purest light available from all sources, must progress and come gradually nearer to the truth. Small groups



have tried and are trying the experiment, and their experience shows that it works. Just as Canning called in the aid of the New World to redress the balance of the Old, so we call in the "Mass Judgment" of the community—and especially of the noblest part of the community—to check the vagaries of the individual judgment. Thus there comes a living progressive Authority which is neither objective nor subjective, but a true blend of each. In it there will never be Uniformity, but a rich and fertile Unity.

## VI. GUIDANCE.

This leads us on naturally to the question of Guidance. (For a fuller treatment of this, see W. C. Braithwaite's Swarthmore Lecture entitled *Spiritual Guidance in Quaker Experience*.) Guidance is merely another aspect of Authority, for it is only what we recognise at the moment as our Authority that we allow to guide us. How sad that often our Authority is an unworthy one, and that we are led as by a will-o'-the-wisp into bogs and marshy fens! On the other hand, as we honestly live up to the light that we have, that Light burns with ever steadier glow, and becomes more and more purged of human error. The Light shines through a human medium and we must see that this medium is so clear and pure as not to refract its rays.

This question of Divine Guidance is one of absorbing interest. Thousands of human beings

have believed—and still believe—that they are guided by some Divine Power, and that this guidance is specially manifest at the crises of their lives. We often speak of Conscience as the “voice of God.” Scripture says “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah xxx. 21). Socrates had his Daimon or Familiar Spirit, whispering in his ear and guiding him aright. What is Conscience? Have we each a Daimon? Does God guide us, and if so, how? Now it seems to me that if we use “Conscience” in the broad sense of the capacity to distinguish between a higher and a lower, between a right and a wrong, it is indistinguishable from the Inner Light. Surely it is the “that of God” within us that constitutes this moral sense, this sensibility of moral distinctions, and so renders possible a moral life. I know that when I see one course to be nobler and more unselfish than another, I *ought* to choose the former. How do I know it, and why ought I to do it? We may argue and argue, but it seems always to come back to this—that we know it because of the Divine Spirit within us, and that we feel we ought to act in such and such a way because of the sense of paramount claim made upon us by a Will that we cannot but recognise as universally and at all times binding—a Will that is not wholly external to ourselves, but that is in some mysterious way our own.

“Our wills are ours—we know not how :  
Our wills are ours—to make them Thine.”

Conscience, however, is often used in a narrower sense, as filling up the content of this paramount claim (the Categorical Imperative of Kant) and telling us exactly what we ought to do and what to avoid. In this sense Conscience may be said to vary with place and time, and what is considered wrong in Britain may be thought quite correct in the Fiji Islands. If we keep the word Conscience for this narrower denotation, then we need another word or words (e.g., the Moral Sense) for the wider meaning. The Inner Light does not seem identical with Conscience in the narrower sense, but can we draw any real distinction between the Inner Light and the Moral Sense? I think not. The Moral Sense, i.e., the realisation of a fundamental distinction between right and wrong, and of an imperative necessity to choose the former if one is to be true to oneself, is surely the most distinctive feature of the Divine Life within us.

Similarly with regard to all kinds of Divine Guidance. As we honestly develop the Divine within us, allowing it free play, waiting at times in calm cool stillness that the great deeps of our nature may be realised, we do become sensitive and sensitised. Avenues of the soul unexplored before seem opened up; the veil between the material world and that other greater world wears thin, and more and more does the glory of the Unseen break upon our spirits. The little pools of our individual lives become conscious of the great uniting ocean flowing all around us; the tide comes flooding in, and the pool (though still

preserving its individuality) is part of the mighty sea. These are inadequate metaphors, but they do give us some idea of the heightening of personality that is possible to us through contact with a greater enfolding Personality. This contact raises us on to a higher level, gives us new powers and strengthens old ones, endows us with insight and foresight, so that we become supernormal. We see the right thing to do, we sense the need of a fellow-man unrealised before, we acquire a *flair* for reading the hearts of our comrades. Jesus had this tide at the full, and we see how manifest the Divine Guidance was in His life. There is nothing unnatural or uncanny in it ; it is the most natural and the most glorious thing in life. The early Friends were often led to go to a certain spot, or to do a certain apparently meaningless thing, or to deviate suddenly from their regular routine of life ; and as they obeyed the prompting, they found they were led to minister to human needs (*cf.* Stephen Grelletts possibly mythical sermon as recorded in "Preaching to Nobody," a chapter in *A Book of Quaker Saints*, by L. Violet Hodgkin ; and W. C. Braithwaite's Swarthmore Lecture mentioned above, pp. 82-85).

Modern psychology tends to confirm and to explain these happenings.<sup>1</sup> What it teaches us

<sup>1</sup> On the whole question of the bearing of Modern Psychology upon the Spiritual Life, I would strongly recommend *Christianity and Psychology*, by F. R. Barry, and *Psychology and the Christian Life*, by Pym (both published by the Student Christian Movement).

about Telepathy, or about the Sub-conscious, helps us to understand them better. But it all amounts to this—that obedience to the Inner Light, letting the Light shine through, heightens and quickens personality, enlarges the power of perception, and renders possible things impossible before. Jesus could sense and satisfy human need as no one else has done, and it was because in Him the Light shone fully ; “ in Him was no darkness at all.” It is all simple and natural, just what one would expect from the God-possessed soul. Let us not attribute these powers to lower agencies. Let us have done with magic and mechanical interpretations of mental phenomena. Whatever of good and of truth there may be in Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Spiritualism, and in other movements so much discussed to-day, let us thankfully adopt, “ baptising them into Christ ” as long as they seem honestly baptisable. As far as they seem to proceed along lines indicating a spiritual or personal communion between our spirit and the Divine, we may assume them to be right ; where they turn aside into the mechanical or the magical, where they emphasise the occult rather than the spiritual, let us be on our guard and “ test the spirits whether they be of God.”

It is of course fatally possible for a man to be misled, or rather to mislead himself. He may imagine a prompting to be of God when it really proceeds from some lower source, such as his own lust or his diseased imagination. The only test,

I think, is the sternly ethical one which enabled the early Friends to avoid the perils of Ranterism—"by their fruits ye shall know them." If in following a lead we find ourselves growing in grace, increasingly acquiring a true self-control, and becoming better able to serve our fellows, we may safely conclude that it is the Divine Light which is leading us. If, however, our powers of service are dwindling and we are becoming more self-absorbed, we may know that the light is as the lights of the Wreckers, luring us on to shipwreck on a pitiless coast. A good test is surely our power of pure enjoyment; whatever helps us more fully and truly to enjoy life is good, for evil robs us of our power to enjoy even that to which our passion clings, and to which we are enslaved. In one of H. G. Wells's stories the author says of his hero and heroine when they have been false to their ideal, that all the wider interests they had in common, their political intentions, their impersonal schemes, began to pass out of their intercourse. "Our situation closed upon us like a trap and hid the sky. Something more intense had our attention by the feet, and we used our wings no more. I do not think that we even had the real happiness and beauty and delight of one another." That surely is profoundly true, and it is a tribute and a witness to the Light Within. Man cannot fall short of his true self without vague dissatisfaction and regret.

## VII. THE INNER LIGHT AND CHRIST.

Finally, can we find any light on the question as to the connection between the Inner Light and Christ? We have seen that George Fox identified them. Was he correct, and if so in what sense can we understand it to-day? We are here plunging into an ocean where we soon get out of our depth. If, however, we remember that the ocean is not something to be dreaded, not a problem to be solved, not an intellectual Scylla or a theological Charybdis, but is in deed and truth the boundless ocean of the Love of God, we shall lose all fear. "Perfect love casteth out fear," and to get out of one's depth in this ocean is the greatest experience in life.

Let us continue working from within outward, reaching out to God from that of Him that we know best, namely our own truest and noblest selves, and interpreting the universe in terms of spiritual personality and not of mechanical action. A recent book by Dr. A. T. Cadoux<sup>1</sup> is very helpful here, and gives us much food for thought. Now our conception of Christ depends ultimately on our idea of God, yet whence do we get our idea of God? We seem largely to have assumed that we must somehow evolve an idea of God (generally from our own inner consciousness), and then reason from that idea as our main principle and major premise. But what if the idea we have so formed

<sup>1</sup> *Essays in Christian Thinking*, Swarthmore Press  
6s. 6d.



be a wrong one? In that event the conclusions drawn from it will not necessarily be sound ones, and our whole life may get on to a wrong tack. Should we not rather form our ideas of God from what we do know than from what we do not know? The only thing that we really know is our self, and if we believe that at the core of that self is something of God, we shall not think it irreverent or blasphemous to suggest that we start from that. "We find that the centre of faith is not belief in God, but belief in ourselves; that is the real act of faith, and belief in God is only its reasonable unfolding. . . . Unless there is something of God in us, we shall have nothing by which to recognise Him when He is brought to us." (Cadoux, *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 36.) Arguing then from what is best and noblest in ourselves, we assume that God cannot be less than that; the natural assumption is of course that He is immeasurably more. As we get to know better people than ourselves, our conception of human personality deepens and with it our conception of God; until at last we come to Jesus of Nazareth, who is for us the fairest flower of humanity—so fair as to be absolutely and essentially unique—and as we look at Jesus our conception of God becomes immeasurably higher. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In Jesus, that is in humanity at its highest, God is revealed as fully as is possible under human conditions. As we look at Jesus, we say "God is like that," and in that moment, our seeking souls find peace. The



whole process depends for its validity on the Inner Light; if there be not "that of God" within us, we are derelicts tossing on a dark uncharted sea. We may, therefore, simply convert the statement made a few moments ago, and say that our conception of God depends ultimately on our idea of Christ. Is there any other of whom we can say the same?

If we start then from what is noblest in our self and from the person and teaching of Jesus, we are led to think of God as a personal spirit. We can hardly think of God as less than personal. To Jesus, God was not a principle or an abstraction, but *Father*. He thought of God in terms that were natural and personal, not official and mechanical. It is inconceivable that He was deceived on this fundamental point. A mis-led Jesus could never have become the Christ of the Ages. To us likewise it is more satisfying to conceive of God as personal than as Energy or Force. Energy and Force are not self-existing abstractions; there must be something possessing energy or exerting force. We are certain that the fundamental reality of our being is that which thinks and loves and wills, and we can hardly hold that the fundamental reality of the universe from which we draw our being is without thought and love and will.

It is true that many find a difficulty in thinking of God as personal, but probably this is due to an inadequate conception of personality. At any rate, the difficulty here seems less than in

any other direction. The only alternatives to believing that God is personal are (1) to believe that the fundamental reality of the universe is not spirit, and (2) to believe that it is impersonal spirit. The latter expression would seem to be a contradiction in terms, for how can we apply the word "spirit" to that which neither thinks nor knows nor wills? The former belief, viz., that the fundamental reality of the universe is not spirit, is either Materialism or Pantheism, and either of these is attended by far greater difficulties than a belief in a personal God. "A difficulty in thinking of God as personal is often found in the assertion that personality implies limitation. "I know myself," it is said, "only by contrast to what is not myself." Lotze (*Microcosmus*, Eng. trans., II., 678ff), showed that the fundamental thing was not consciousness of limit but of the self, which in our case happened to be limited. And if, as we have seen, we have personality wherever we have ordered, centralised experience, it will appear that there is no special incongruity between infinity and personality. It is no doubt difficult to imagine an infinite person, but it is as difficult to imagine an infinite being, of any sort." (Cadoux, *op. cit.*, p. 48). In fact, if we still think limits essential to personality, we find that God has obviously limited Himself in certain ways, e.g., our moral freedom and power of choice.

I cannot forbear giving a further quotation from Dr. Cadoux's book (p. 119), so apposite is it to the whole line of thought of this lecture. "We

need, of course, to be careful lest in thinking of God as personal we transfer to Him all that we find incidental to personality in ourselves. We cannot think of Him as sundered from our personality as we from each other. The very nature of our primal experience of Him is of a co-operation and inworking more intimate than is possible with our nearest fellow. And this relationship to Him is essential to our personality in a way that no other single person is, despite the great part played by other personalities in the growth of our own, and is indeed the necessary condition of all wholesome fellowship with our fellows."

We find God, then, in our highest and our best. As we rise to heights of unselfish devotion and learn that it is more blessed to give than to receive, we live as though there is in the world a purpose of good which we recognise rather than create. "In all the highest, most characteristic human endeavour and enjoyment there is a universal element, a rising to a standpoint above that of individual interest, a feeling and thinking and acting as though a universal feeling and thought and will in these moments was revealing itself in us and working with us." (Cadoux, *op. cit.*, p. 14.) In other words, we are conscious of a Universal Good Will that is absolutely binding on us by its own inherent goodness—"we needs must love the highest when we see it"—and the Divine Spark within us leaps up in answer thereto. We make the affirmation, implicitly or expressedly,

“ God is Personal ; I am personal ; God is spirit ; I am spirit,” and Life—the Life of the Ages, the Life that is life indeed, the only Life worth having—comes to be realised as consisting in communion between my spirit and Him. This is conversion ; this is the new birth—the Soul’s Awakening to the God who has been within us all the time, whose Love has called forth the love of our own hearts, and who is the very basis of our existence. Without Him we cannot exist, for “ in Him we live and move and have our being ” ; His seeking Love evokes ours, for “ we love Him because He first loved us.” So the Double Search ends in the Double Finding, and two spirits find peace and joy in blest communion.

If we have seemed to labour this point, it is because of its vital importance. If God be not personal, Jesus becomes inexplicable—and so I think do I, and you, and all of us. Also, if God be not personal, what ground have we for a belief in the Inner Light ? We fail hopelessly when we come to define or describe this Inner Light, but surely the best way of regarding it is to think of it as a blending of two personalities. Physical analogies are often misleading, and it is not altogether satisfactory to say that God is in us as the father is in his child. Still there is a measure of truth in it, and it is a better illustration than that of the candle in the lantern. Or as someone has said, God will be in the ideal man, not as a man is in his clothes, but as a composer’s music is in the work of the perfect instrumentalist.

God is more or less incarnate in every man. God is the permanent potentiality of becoming incarnate ; man may become increasingly capable of receiving this incarnation. A belief in the Inner Light may almost be said to make Christ a necessity of thought. So far from rendering Him superfluous, it demands Him. A God of love *must* fully manifest Himself to humanity, and He can do so only through one who is capable of receiving the revelation. If you and I are to some extent " God incarnate," a full incarnation becomes a necessity of thought. Let me quote again from Dr. Cadoux a passage which, coming from a non-Friend, is remarkable in its emphasis on the Inner Light ; " We saw," he says, " that we can know nothing of God unless life brings us the possibility of an inward experience of Him independent of any knowledge of Him that comes from without ; that we have this experience wherever in love of the beautiful, in loyalty to truth and right and love, we rise above self-interest : that these are the characteristically human experiences lifting man above the brute and achieving personality ; and that thus the deepest experience of life, upon which all its values depend, is that the most truly human in us is a concurrence of the human and divine, an in-working of God. It is only putting this in other words to say that all that is truly human is an entering of God into humanity, which, since it is the great good to which our whole being, the universe and all we know of it, urge us, we must interpret as the

disclosure of God's intent to incarnate Himself in man ; for this He accepts the self-limitation which allows man to be free, that man may know the dignity of the most intimate co-operation and fellowship with Him, and that He may know the joy of the completest self-giving " (*op. cit.*, pp. 176-7).

But alas ! we are only too painfully conscious of the partial incarnation of the Divine in ourselves ; again and again we fail to manifest the Divine spirit. Still we believe that a being who was fitted by the endowments of birth fully to manifest the Divine, and who would surrender himself wholeheartedly to the Divine within him—one in whom, in short, would dwell all the fulness of the godhead bodily, to use the Scriptural phrase—would be really God incarnate, would be the ideal man. Such an one we find in Jesus. He was a real man—and we must guard His manhood inviolably if He is to be of any value to us ; He was a complete man and therefore completely blended the human and the Divine. The Inner Light dwelt in Him in full measure ; it shone through Him undistorted and undimmed. If God's aim has been to reveal Himself to man, and if of all men Jesus alone gave God all that He sought, then in Jesus God is Himself as not elsewhere in the universe. This marks Jesus off as morally and spiritually unique, without our having to think of Him in terms of magic or mechanics. He shows us the Divine life humanly lived ; He liberates God and Gives God free play in His life.

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A higher or greater uniqueness than this I personally do not desire, nor can I conceive of anything higher. Jesus just because he was whole man, was "very God." A more essential uniqueness than this seems to me unthinkable. In His life and in His death, Jesus lived the Life of God among men, revealed the Father's heart, and saved man from his sin and selfishness by showing the Father's love. The life and death of Jesus were unique ; they can never be repeated. "No man can ever again enter so deeply with God into the experience of the world's sin." To some these statements will seem dogmatic and to stand in need of proof. I have space here only to say (and I do it with much humility) that they are the result of years of thought about the life of Jesus and years of thankful experience of His help and inspiration. If they are dogmatic, at any rate they are not hasty generalisations.

In the light of what has now been said, I think George Fox was not far wrong when he identified the Inner Light with Christ. If the Inner Light has shone perfectly in Jesus alone, if He stands for us for God and shows us the very heart of the Eternal, we do not greatly violate language when we say that Christ is the Light. Stated more exactly, perhaps, we should say that the Light is the revealing of the Father in whom Jesus believed and on whose reality He based His whole life, but as a matter of practice Jesus becomes for us the Light ; for it is as we look at Him that we most clearly see God.



If we ask the interesting question *how* Jesus was capable of responding completely to the will of God, whereas no other man has been, we come to a matter on which there is great difference of opinion. Two answers are suggested in the New Testament, and these seem really to contradict each other. The first is that Jesus began to be as the child of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit. The second is that He was the incarnation of a Being who had pre-existed in eternal co-existence with the Spirit. There are grave difficulties in accepting either of these, though this does not prove either of them to be wrong. Some may accept one, others the other, others neither. Mercifully the matter is not essential to a knowledge of Christ and to a complete Christian life. An interesting suggestion is made by Dr. Cadoux to the effect that the developing spirituality of certain devout families in Israel provided the hereditary conditions necessary for a full revelation of God. If we do not accept one or other of the New Testament theories, we must I suppose suspend judgment until some further light arises, if ever it should arise. Possibly on points that are non-essential further light will not come. The world has enough to do to fasten on the essentials of life, and to explore them. Let the Church give up some of its theological juggling and splitting of hairs, and get to business! And if any one turns on the author of this lecture with a "Physician, heal thyself," I fear I must plead guilty. Still I have this defence—that Friends as a rule have



been busy enough in practical good deeds, and that there seems to be the need for a little clear thinking and restatement of our fundamentals, even if that process should seem to some to be merely "theological juggling."

#### VIII. THE TRINITY.

Some of those who read these words will, I fear, miss a great deal that they will think ought to be included. They will miss certain familiar words and phrases, and deplore what they will deem a certain unfaithfulness to the traditions of the elders. I am aware, for instance, that I have nowhere spoken of the Trinity, nor have I designated Christ as the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity. The reason is that these expressions, though once helpful, have now outgrown their use, and are hindrances rather than helps. After a building has reached a certain height we no longer need the scaffolding. The conception of the Trinity as worked out by the later Fathers of the Church seems to mean an example of that mechanical way of looking at things that this lecture deprecates throughout. Doubtless there still exist "Trinitarians" who look with suspicion on "Unitarians," and "Unitarians" who retaliate by treating "Trinitarians" with contempt, but the names are merely echoes of a controversy that is dead and done with. We have moved on to a different level of thought since the third and fourth centuries A.D., and George Fox

has been one of our main "elevators." The question at issue to-day is not whether God be one Person or three, but whether there be something of God in man as man or not. Is the Divine Spirit essentially a part of our humanity, or has that Spirit to be introduced into us—mechanically or otherwise—from without ? This seems to be the real dividing issue.

If modern Psychology has taught us anything, it is the unity of Personality. By a Person we understand a self-conscious spirit, that thinks, feels and wills, and that knows it thinks, feels and wills. Our Personality is a unity ; there stands our Self, co-ordinating all our thoughts, desires, and purposes, unifying and correlating them, giving them meaning and content, and affording us the only example we have of a Cause which is itself uncaused. When we think about God as being Personal, it is simplest to assume that we are created "in His image," i.e., that Personality in us is on the same lines as in Him, though in Him Personality is Perfection. We get all we need from a belief in the personality of God, without bringing in fragments of Greek metaphysics or Roman legalism. And in so doing, in thinking thus simply and naturally of God as One, we are true to the experience of the New Testament writers. To them the Trinity was not a dogma—the word itself does not occur in the New Testament. They had rather an experience of the Tri-unity of God—a very different thing. They knew God as their Father and Creator, the

Lord of lords and King of kings; they knew Him as Comrade and Saviour in that Jesus of Nazareth who had revealed the Father to them and who had talked as never men talked; and then, when Jesus's life and death had lifted them to a new level and made them capable of a further revelation of God (which is always possible to a heightened personality) they knew Him as their Comforter and Inspirer in the Holy Spirit or Holy enthusiasm that nerved them to do and to die. They drew no hard and fast distinctions; they spoke of God or Christ or the Spirit often in interchangeable terms (e.g., "Now the Lord is the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 17; "Even as from the Lord, the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 18; also Romans viii. 9-17). It was a glorious Tri-unity of experience which we all may share to-day, very different from the Trinitarian Dogma of a later date.

One does not wish here to stray into the often dreary by-paths of theological discussion, but it is a matter of historic interest just to see how the Trinitarian formula was arrived at. The Greek Fathers after much speculative thought propounded the formula "God is one Being (*Ousia*) in three *Hypostaseis*." It is very difficult to translate this last word; probably "modes of existence" is somewhere near it. Allowing for the defective knowledge of personality in those days, we may say that this was a thoroughly comprehensible proposition. Unfortunately however the formula had to be turned into Latin, and when the Latin Fathers came along they rendered it as "God is

one Substance in three Persons." To them, however, the word Person meant nothing like what it means to us. The Persona was originally the mask through which the actor spoke his part on the stage ; then it came to denote the actor himself or the part the actor played. Even the Latin Fathers then meant only something like this—God is one Substance, playing three different parts. Possibly this is enough to show how out-of-date is the controversy, and how the terms used have completely changed their meaning in the course of centuries. It ought to make us very careful—and very charitable.

We would seem to be nearest to the New Testament teaching when we think of Jesus as fully human and therefore as fully divine. Humanity and divinity are not opposites, as though so much had to be deducted from the one to be added to the other. If the belief in the Inner Light be true, humanity is instinct with God, and the Complete Man would be divine. At any rate, there would seem to be one principle from which we must never depart in attempting to estimate the character of Christ—nothing must be admitted which in any way lessens His full humanity. Whatever does so, lessens His value for us. If He had no genuine and developing moral experience, if He was a God masquerading in human form, if He was unable to sin or if it was easier for Him to do right than it is for us—then His life loses its validity and meaning. As long as we stand by His true manhood we are safe.

We might almost say—and it is not irreverent—“Take care of His manhood, and His Godhead will take care of itself.” The whole history of the Christian Church shows how difficult the Church has found it to do this. In a natural desire to do Him honour, the Church has forgotten or minimised or played tricks with His manhood, and has in so doing robbed Him of His moral value. It has been an instance of mistaken loyalty, one of the most tragic and disastrous instances in history.

The belief in the unity of Personality that has been emphasised above, does not preclude us from thinking of God's Personality as infinitely varied. It is no bare, barren Personality that we affirm of Him. Christian thought was necessarily led to affirm distinctions in the Divine unity when it accepted the Divinity of Christ and also His distinction from the Father. There seem to be three ways of apprehending God: (1) as the Source and Upholder of all things; (2) as self-limited in the “Son”; and (3) as reproducing His life in us—the Holy Spirit. One gladly recognises a trinity in such a sense, as giving an experience of God richer and fuller than can flow from a conception of God as a bare undifferentiated unit.

## IX. THE VALIDITY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

The emphasis throughout this lecture has been placed on Experience rather than on Dogma. Now, if someone asks “How do you know that

your religious experience is valid? Is it not possible that you are self-deceived, the victim of a pure subjectivism?" what are we to say in reply? Personally I should attempt to answer the objection in some such way as the following:

It seems to me that exactly the same difficulties which trouble us about religious truths may be as reasonably advanced against what the plain man calls common-sense truths, truths concerning which no sane person is ever really in doubt. There are precisely similar reasons for doubting the existence of the pillar-box that I can see down the street as for doubting the existence of God. In both cases vast assumptions have to be made (though we are often unconscious of making them) and in both cases the doubt is simply a doubt whether our own natural faculties are instruments that tell the truth, whether our own apparent experiences may be trusted as real and actual. There is no knowledge of any kind which we can acquire without making big assumptions to start with.

If we ask whether religious belief may not be a dream, without any object answering to it outside our own minds—or whether the prickings of conscience are anything more than a phenomenon of which the beginning and the end are in our own fancy—or whether the peace that comes in answer to prayer is anything more than a reaction within the personal consciousness—the answer does not differ in kind from that which we give to the question "How do I know that there is an actual

pillar-box down the street ? ” I believe in the reality of the physical objects around me, because I cannot but believe that there is something outside of me which gives me these sensations of hardness or softness, red or blue, sweet or bitter. In like manner, I believe in the reality of God because I cannot but believe that there is someone other than myself who gives me these feelings of aspiration or penitence, peace or remorse, of a divine protection or inflowing strength. I believe that the pillar-box is real and not imaginary, because it gives a meaning and value to my whole experience ; it fits in and harmonises with my other sense-impressions. A belief in its existence *works*. If it existed only in my imagination, it would fail to satisfy some test ; my life experiences would not be a harmony ; my theory of the universe would not work.

Hence, I think the late R. A. Armstrong (for example) was justified in saying (*God and the Soul*, chap. i.) : “ If it is seen that the machine or organism which we call a human being is comparatively useless, feeble, and inefficient while it is without God, but becomes useful, strong, and efficient when the love of God is in it, then that is an immeasurably strong argument for the reality of God—for the love of Him being founded in truth, not in illusion. If it is seen that the belief in God gives meaning and force and coherence to the language of life, whereas without it, it is a mere jumble of letters, then that is a stupendously powerful reason for believing in



God. My main contention is that the belief in God works, and that therefore we do well to believe."

Someone may object that this is pure Pragmatism, inasmuch as we base our belief in God on the ground of its beneficial results to humanity. But on what else can we base it? Psychology cannot establish the existence of God or give us a criterion of truth, because Psychology is concerned with processes, not with origins. So we turn to Ethics. We must judge an idea, not as it is in itself, but by its effects. We ask what are its results considered practically, or considered in the æsthetic, moral, scientific or religious sphere. An idea has value in so far as its fruits have value. This at once leads us on to Ethics, and from Ethics further still. For once we have admitted value, we have admitted appreciation from the moral or social point of view, the existence of "ends," and, in a word, Metaphysics.

It is not here contended that there must be an objective reality behind religious experience, because it is so extraordinarily beneficial to mankind, but that the only conceivable cause of its extreme usefulness is an objective reality behind it. Our position is not "It is true because it is useful," but "It is useful because it is true."

In taking up this position we are casting aside empiricism (i.e., the system which rests solely on experience and induction) and boldly taking our



stand on a principle, namely, that truth alone can give freedom and power. Taking this principle as fundamental, we search the universe to see what does give freedom and power. We discover religious experience to be the most liberating and power-producing force known, and confidently assert that there must be truth behind it. In so doing, we are contending for a rational universe and for the possibility of rational thought; we are pleading the cause of reason and truth. If religion be an illusion, and yet gives man his highest development, and lifts him above himself, then we must crown a lie and dethrone reason. A universe so hopelessly perverse as to produce such results from delusion or lies is a universe where human thought is paralysed, a region of moral and intellectual chaos. Our so-called Pragmatism resolves itself into a demand for a reasonable universe.

If we look at the records of religious experience throughout history, we find no limit to what the life of God in the soul of man can do. It conquers prejudice, promotes joy, transforms character. It is no mere flash in the pan; it lasts. Wherever found, under whatsoever name, the result is broadly speaking the same; and the higher the experience the more powerful the life flowing therefrom. It is a life of triumph and victory, the overcoming life. Those who live it are "more than conquerors," super-conquerors. They have joy and peace in believing, they know the peace that passeth understanding. If we may take

Christianity as the highest kind of religious experience, and confine ourselves for the moment to the field of Christian experience in particular, we find that, though covering a smaller area than religious experience in general, it is more intense. Christianity claims to be *par excellence* the religion of power. It holds that an impartial examination into the testimony (corporate and individual) of those who have experienced it and who are at this moment experiencing it, will prove that no other experience or way of life has done more good to the world. By that claim Christianity in particular (as religion in general) must stand or fall. The sinner who out of weakness has been made strong, the man who once was blind but now sees, the nation that may put its trust in the Unseen Forces and by losing its life find it—these are the ultimate proofs of the reality of a religious experience. As Professor William James says, the final test of a belief is not its origin, but the way in which it works on the whole.

This is a criterion that the stoutest insisters on supernatural origin have been forced to use in the end, and that to-day they gladly use. "By their fruits," says William James, "ye shall know them, not by their roots. The roots of a man's virtue are inaccessible to us. No appearances whatever are infallible proofs of grace. Our practice is the only sure evidence, even to ourselves, that we are Christians." And then, quoting from Jonathan Edwards, he adds: "The degree in which our experience is productive of practice

shows the degree in which our experience is spiritual and divine."

We may well quote here the striking phrase used by Dr. Rufus M. Jones in the introduction to his *Studies in Mystical Religion* : "The significant fact (of religious experience) is not the sense of expansion or of freedom or of joy. It is not something merely subjective. It is that such experiences minister to life, construct personality, and conduce to the increased power of the race—energy to live by actually does come to them from somewhere. *The universe backs the experience.*"

## X. CONCLUSION.

Space will not allow us to trace the working out of the belief in the Inner Light in other departments of life. We have had perforce to confine ourselves mainly to the intellectual. Books, however, abound showing how Friends have based their whole polity, worship, and social life upon this belief. It is the reason for our meeting for worship on a basis of silence, for our emphasising the universal priesthood of all believers, for our form of Church Government, for our respect of personality (as shown for example in our attitude towards oppression and war, and in our belief in the equality of the sexes) and for our enthusiasm for Social Reform.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> References for above topics :—*Social Service : its place in the Society of Friends*, by Joshua Rowntree. *What is Quakerism ?* by Edward Grubb. *The Quakers : their Story and Message*, by A. Neave Brayshaw.

The whole witness of the Society of Friends to the world springs from the Inner Light. Its religious life and its social service (if the two can be distinguished) spring directly therefrom. It is the very nerve of the Society: if it be cut, the Society ceases to be the Society of Friends. It might become one of the evangelical bodies of Nonconformity, and it might do service that way, but it would not be the Society of Friends and its outlook would be different. I believe that an honest and searching investigation into the doctrine of the Inner Light will give us all we need—a firm belief in God, a sound evangelism, a sense of forgiveness and power over sin, a real experience of the spirit of Christ in our hearts, and a baptism by the Holy Spirit that is the only baptism needed. To abandon this fundamental belief would be for the Society to commit suicide.

There are of course weaknesses in the setting forth of the doctrine, and there are dangers to which Friends are peculiarly liable. These have been clearly set forth in current Quaker literature, and we are all probably aware of them. Still, the fact that mistakes have been made in the expression of a belief does not necessarily invalidate the belief itself. Some of the defenders of the Inner Light have misunderstood it, or have isolated it, or have lost their mental and spiritual balance, or have made extravagant claims for it—perfectly true. So have some of the defenders of every doctrine ever held and preached by man. We are not going to abandon it merely for that

reason. Members of other Christian bodies point out to us at times the dangers that peculiarly beset Mysticism and a belief in the Inner Light. We are thankful to have them pointed out. There are very real dangers, and the price of Freedom is perpetual vigilance. The great glory of George Fox was his religious sanity, if one may use the expression. His mysticism was so sternly and severely ethical, that he was saved from the besetting snare of all mystics. He brought everything to the touchstone of the enlightened conscience. Whatever is ethically wrong cannot be of God. Thousands of men have humbugged themselves into believing that it can, and the path of history is lined with the tomb-stones of their careers.

If anyone says "Why all this pother about theology? Why not let us just turn to and live the good life?" I am heartily with him. Nothing equals in force and value the testimony of a life well and truly lived. It is the greatest witness to a man's belief in God, it is the greatest need of the world to-day. There is, however, such a thing as *poise* in life. A soul that is sure of itself, that has digged deep and thought hard, that has struggled through many difficulties into peace, does attain a certain poise or balance that it would not otherwise get. Poise spells power, and one cannot but think that the soul that has found intellectual and spiritual peace through conflict has more power to serve than the soul that has taken things easily, that has never agonised, that

lives more on the surface. This may not be the case. Temperaments differ, and we cannot legislate for others. But some of us know that for us the water of life has been found in pretty deep wells, and we believe it is all the sweeter when we have drawn it up. Faith does not come easily to all ; let those who find full satisfaction in their " only believe " remember this at times, and be full of sympathy with their differently-constituted fellows.

One would conclude this lecture with a reflection and an appeal. The reflection is this : If the recent discoveries of Science have made the universe so much more interesting and thrilling, how much more should the deeper conception of God that is coming to us to-day enlarge and quicken our spiritual life ? How much grander and fuller of meaning the old religious phraseology should become ! We are called to be " workers together with God," and as our idea of God develops, our sense of our high calling and of the dignity of our task develops too. As we read much more into the name " God " than we used to do, as we feel that the Universe is the expression of Spirit and that it is at heart " friendly " to us, there comes a sense of comfort and of inspiration that could never come before. According to our faith be it unto us !

If we think along lines like these, there comes to us an overwhelming sense of the wonder of God and of " that of God " in us. To be co-operators with Him must surely become our one and only

aim. His image within recognises His truth without. We feel we are made for Him as the Lover for the Beloved.

Hence comes the appeal. Shall not we, to whom something of this vision has been given, rise up in the power of the Lord—in the sense of deep communion with this all-pervading Spirit—and go forth to live and proclaim it? His Spirit anticipates us. He is already at work in men's hearts. We need not despair, nor think our task is hopeless. There is "that of God" in all men, and we must touch it. And touch it we can, if we are willing to pay the price. It means that we must be ready to suffer with and for our fellow man, to enter into his life, and as far as may be to identify ourselves with his lot. In this ter-centenary year can we not resolve to enter on a great Crusade—not with any pomp or ritual, not with any display or riot of organisation, but with a deep determination to "consecrate ourselves for their sakes"? Have we ever taken life seriously enough? Have we taken Christ in earnest? Are we not sometimes too satisfied and pleased with our selves, our homes, and our surroundings? It is through the tender heart and the enlightened conscience that intellectual apprehension mainly comes. We have no right to ask "What is Truth?" until we have first said "Here am I, send me."

If our Society could live out its beliefs in this Year of Grace 1924, we should light again the candle of the Lord. We must humbly confess



that we have woefully failed, but this need not mean failure for ever. There is yet time to redeem the past. Will not our young people in particular—those who have not as yet had the chance to fail, and whose privileges are great—will they not come forward and dedicate themselves to the work? “Fellow-workers with God”—and what a God! It will mean sacrifice in some directions, and doing without certain things that might otherwise be natural and right. No great cause can be served without discipline and hardship. But the experiences of the Great War showed us that the spirit of sacrifice was still with us, ready to leap out when a big enough call came, though often unobserved in the smaller things of life. Is there a big enough call for us to-day? Do we realise how great God is, and how great the need of humanity? Do we magnify our calling? If we have not pitched the key high enough, let us hesitate no longer. Let us demand “The utmost for the Highest”—the uttermost possibilities of our being for Him who is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, yet whose nature and whose name is Love.

Let us close on a quieter note, so as to come back if we can to that calm earnestness in which we began, that “pure stillness” so pregnant with energy and good works.

If religion is to touch us in the great deeps of our nature, it must be simple and natural. The simple is not the shallow; the simple is the profound. The more naturally we think of God,

and the more simply we live with Him, the more effective will our witness be. It is on experience rather than on creed that Friends place their main reliance. We believe that our experience of the Divine life in our souls is a real and genuine one, and we are prepared to trust it because we hold that God is our Father, and we His children. From this simple experience, which surely is meant for all, and which should be as natural as the turning of the flower to the sun, springs the whole Quaker testimony. The sensitiveness of conscience that is the inevitable result will be brought to bear on the problems that beset us—philosophical, theological, economic, industrial, and the like—and will be a perpetual challenge both to ourselves and to others to press on to better things. If that note of challenge to the existing order should ever die out of the Quaker message, the glory would indeed have departed. In the great adventure of the Church of Christ there is no room for satisfaction with things as they are. The future belongs to those who in the name of Christ and humanity challenge the existing order as violating the ideal that possesses their souls, and who are prepared to live here and now as though their ideal were actually realised.

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